



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

3 November 2011

HND103832.FE

Honduras: Police corruption, police participation in criminal activities and measures taken by the government

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to a report from Transparency International (TI) on perceptions of corruption, Honduras ranks 134th out of 178 countries (TI 2010, 2-3). That ranking, going from the country with the lowest perception of corruption to the country with the highest, was based on surveys of business and assessments carried out by independent institutions and published between January 2009 and September 2010 (ibid., 3-5). According to the Freedom House annual report, corruption "continues to dominate the political scene" in Honduras (Freedom House 2011). An article published by *El Heraldo*, a national daily newspaper based in Tegucigalpa (*El Heraldo* n.d.), indicates that the National Police of Honduras (Policía Nacional de Honduras) is dealing with [translation] "one of its worst crises" since its inception in 1998 (ibid., 6 Mar. 2011). The article also stated that [translation] "the high rates of common and organized crime, the high level of impunity [for police officers] . . . could be the main consequences of the nearly complete failure of the criminal investigation system" (ibid.). According to the Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigations (Dirección Nacional de Investigación Criminal, DNIC), the National Police of Honduras solved little more than 38 percent of the homicides committed in 2010, that is, 2,300 out of 6,236 (ibid.).

According to the National Directorate of Internal Affairs (Dirección Nacional de Asuntos Internos) of the National Police of Honduras, the cost to the country of police corruption since 2009 is approximately 85 million lempira (HNL) [4,460,290.64 CAD (XE 13 Sept. 2011)] (*El Heraldo* 5 July 2011). The Directorate noted that each open file costs the government more than 17,000 HNL, that is, approximately 900 USD (ibid.).

In 2010, the Ministry of Public Security (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública), which oversees the Honduras National Police (Honduras n.d.), had a budget of 7,787,000.05 HNL [411,516.10 CAD (XE 9 Sept. 2011)] (*El Heraldo* 7 Mar. 2011). Of this, 88 percent went toward the payroll, while the remaining 12 percent was used for operations, to purchase equipment and munitions and to maintain vehicles (ibid.). The chief of police stated that with [translation] "that percentage, it is impossible to cover all our needs" (ibid.). He also indicated that the computers and communication equipment used by police officers are obsolete (ibid.).

Police participation in criminal activities

According to the National Directorate of Internal Affairs, more than 5,000 police officers were exposed for corruption between 1999 and the summer of 2011 (*El Heraldo* 5 Sept. 2011; *La Tribuna* 16 June 2011). An article published by *El Heraldo* indicated that, between 2005 and June 2010, 7,775 complaints had been filed, 4,907 of which were against officers of the preventive police (Policía Preventiva), and 2,868 against the Criminal Investigations Directorate (7 Mar. 2011). An article in *La Prensa*, a newspaper based in San Pedro Sula (*La Prensa* n.d.), indicates that, between January and 30 August 2011, 196 police officers were arrested, but the Ministry of Security stated that the witnesses failed to appear in court to testify against them (*ibid.* . 30 Aug. 2011). Information on the developments of that case could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. According to the director of the National Directorate of Internal Affairs, abuse of authority, human rights violations, the failure to respect their responsibilities as public servants, and illegal arrests are the basis of most complaints against police officers (*La Tribuna* 16 June 2011). According to *El Heraldo*, complaints are also made against police officers for kidnapping and drug trafficking (*El Heraldo* 7 Mar. 2011).

According to the minister of security, organized crime has infiltrated the police force, not only the administration, but also senior officials and police officers (*La Prensa* 6 Sept. 2011a). Cited in several sources, the minister of security stated that approximately 10 police officers [translation] “have become air traffic controllers” in order to ensure the safe landing of small aircraft transporting drugs between South America and North America (*La Prensa* 1 Sept. 2011a; *La Tribuna* 2 Sept. 2011; *El Heraldo* 5 Sept. 2011). According to an article published in *La Prensa*, some police officers take advantage of their uniforms to arrest citizens and then steal their vehicles and cellular telephones (1 Sept. 2011b). Moreover, six police officers were arrested in January 2011 for their complicity in a bank robbery (*La Prensa* 1 Sept. 2011a; Agencia EFE 22 Jan. 2011). Information on the fate of the police officers arrested could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

An article published by *El Heraldo* indicates that the police authorities and the Superior Court of Auditors (Tribunal Superior de Cuentas) have signed an agreement to conduct an inquiry into the presumed illegal earnings of some senior officials and police officers (*El Heraldo* 18 June 2011). According to that article, young police officers are suspected of being on the take because, despite their meagre salaries, they [translation] “own haciendas valued at two million HNL [(106,642.05 CAD) (XE 3 Nov. 2011)], luxury cars and homes in exclusive neighbourhoods” (*ibid.*). According to the National Directorate of Internal Affairs, the objective of the inquiry is to determine whether those police officers received gifts or inheritances, or whether they were financed by organized crime (*ibid.*).

Measures taken by the government

Quoted in an article in *La Prensa*, the minister of security stated that [translation] “we have led an offensive against crime and in less than a year and a half kidnappings [committed by police] have been reduced by more than 60 percent” (30 Aug. 2011). Quoted in *El Heraldo*, the director of the National Directorate of Internal Affairs stated that [translation] “maximum efforts” have been made to eradicate corruption among police forces and that the Directorate is trying to make the system more [translation] “transparent” (5 July 2011). According to that article, a hotline has been set up so that the public can report

police officers who commit illegal acts while on duty (*El Herald*o 5 July 2011). Information on the measures taken by the government to eradicate corruption or on the number of people who have used the hotline could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In an article published by *Diario Tiempo*, a daily newspaper in San Pedro Sula, the minister of security is reported to have recognized that the police force needs to be cleaned up, since some officers are linked to organized crime (*Diario Tiempo* 6 Sept. 2011). According to the coordinator of the Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, CIPRODEH), civil society also wants the police force cleaned up because [translation] "it no longer trusts the police" (ibid.).

According to an article in *La Prensa*, the Special Act on the Reform of the National Police (*Ley Especial de Depuración de la Policía Nacional*) was tabled in the National Congress on 5 September 2011 (*La Prensa* 6 Sept. 2011a). That act consists of five articles and is valid only until 27 January 2014, the end of the current presidential term (ibid.). According to the minister of security, the objective of that act is to [translation] "permit the dismissal of police officers who are suspected of collusion with organized crime or who have committed an offence, and prevent them from rejoining the police force" (ibid. 1 Sept. 2011a). The CIPRODEH coordinator noted that it is [translation] "urgent" that the act be adopted in order to prevent fired police officers from returning to the force (*Diario Tiempo* 6 Sept. 2011). According to *Diario Tiempo*, a former minister of security fired a dozen police officers who, following a decision from the Supreme Court, had rejoined the police force and held important positions (ibid.). According to the director general of the police, the current process [translation] "prevents an officer who was caught in the act and who was charged from being relieved of his duties" (*La Prensa* 1 Sept. 2011b). He explained that, instead, the officer is suspended for a period of six months, after which he is either laid off or released (ibid.). If the officer is released, [translation] "the organization obligates us to reinstate him in his position" and he is entitled to the benefits that were suspended (ibid.). According to the minister of security, the law allows for police officers to defend themselves, but [translation] "outside the organization" (ibid. 1 Sept. 2011a).

An article published on 11 September 2011 by *El Herald*o reports that the minister of security was relieved of his duties and that he had to leave the country for security reasons. In a press conference, he reportedly denied the rumour that he was dismissed because of the police reform (*El Herald*o 11 Sept. 2011).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agencia EFE. 22 January 2011. "Desmantelan una banda de policías asaltantes en Honduras." <<http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/93014>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

Diario Tiempo [San Pedro Sula]. 6 September 2011. "Coordinador CIPRODEH: Esperamos que Alvarez saque a todos los policías corruptos."
<<http://www.tiempo.hn/index.php/portada/4834-coordinador-ciprodeh-esperamos-que-alvarez-saque-a-todos-los-policias-corruptos>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

Freedom House. 2011. "Honduras." *Freedom in the World 2011*.
<<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2011&country=8052>> [Accessed 14 Sept. 2011]

El Heraldito [Tegucigalpa]. 11 September 2011. Augustin Lagos. "Álvarez se va del país a 24 horas de ser separado."
<<http://www.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2011/09/12/Noticias/Alvarez-se-va-del-pais-a-24-horas-de-ser-separado>> [Accessed 12 Sept. 2011]

_____. 5 September 2011. "Listo anteproyecto de depuración policial."
<<http://www.elheraldo.hn/Sintesis/Lo-ultimo/Ediciones/2011/09/05/Noticias/Listo-anteproyecto-de-depuracion-policial>> [Accessed 8 Sept. 2011]

_____. 5 July 2011. "Policía corrupta costaría a Honduras 85 millones."
<<http://www.diariowebcentroamerica.com/region/policia-corrupta-costaria-a-honduras-85-millones/>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 18 June 2011. "Investigan nuevos 'ricos' en Policía de Honduras."
<<http://www.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2011/06/19/Noticias/Investigan-nuevos-ricos-en-Policia-de-Honduras>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 7 March 2011. "Infiltrados, el cáncer en la policía de Honduras."
<<http://www.elheraldo.hn/AI%20Frente/listado-nota/Ediciones/2011/03/08/Noticias/Infiltrados-el-cancer-en-la-policia-de-Honduras>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 6 March 2011. "DNIC, presa de carencias y una baja autoestima."
<<http://www.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2011/03/07/Noticias/DNIC-presa-de-carencias-y-una-baja-autoestima>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. N.d. "Quiénes somos." <<http://www.elheraldo.hn/Secciones-Pie/Quienes-Somos>> [Accessed 12 Sept. 2011]

Honduras. N.d. Secretaría de Seguridad. "Dirección General de la Policía Nacional." <<http://www.seguridad.gob.hn/portal/pn/direccion/>> [Accessed 3 Nov. 2011]

La Prensa [San Pedro Sula]. 6 September 2011a. "Depuración de la Policía llega al Congreso Nacional." <<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Tegucigalpa/Depuracion-de-la-Policia-llega-al-Congreso-Nacional>> [Accessed 8 Sept. 2011]

_____. 6 September 2011b. "Ministro de Seguridad tendrá amplios poderes."
<<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Tegucigalpa/Ministro-de-Seguridad-tendra-amplios-poderes>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 1 September 2011a. "Hay 10 oficiales que sirven de controladores aéreos a narcos: Álvarez." <<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Hay-10-oficiales-que-sirven-de-controladores-aereos-a-narcos-Alvarez>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 1 September 2011b. "Utilizando uniforme, policías roban vehículos: ministro." <<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Utilizando-uniforme-policias-roban-vehiculos-ministro>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 30 August 2011. ""Acciones nunca vistas", promete Óscar Álvarez." <<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Acciones-nunca-vistas-promete-Oscar-Alvarez>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. N.d. "Acerca de Nuestras Pautas." <<http://www.laprensa.hn/Institucionales/Acerca-de-Nuestras-Pautas>> [Accessed 13 Sept. 2011]

Transparency International (TI). 2010. *Indice de perception de la corruption 2010*. <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/in_detail#1> [Accessed 2 Nov. 2011]

La Tribuna [Tegucigalpa]. 2 September 2011. "Denuncia de corrupción en la Policía ahuyenta inversionistas." <<http://www.latribuna.hn/2011/09/02/denuncia-de-corrupcion-en-la-policia-ahuyenta-inversionistas/>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

_____. 16 June 2011. "Asuntos Internos: Más de tres mil policías y oficiales están bajo investigación." <<http://www.latribuna.hn/2011/06/16/asuntos-internos-mas-de-tres-mil-policias-y-oficiales-estan-bajo-investigacion/>> [Accessed 6 Sept. 2011]

XE. 3 November 2011. "Résultats du convertisseur universel de devises." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=2000000&From=HNL&To=CAD>> [Accessed 3 Nov. 2011]

_____. 13 September 2011. "Résultats du convertisseur universel de devises." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=85+000+000&From=HNL&To=CAD>> [Accessed 13 Sept. 2011]

_____. 9 September 2011. "Résultats du convertisseur universel de devises." <<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=7+787+000.05&From=HNL&To=CAD>> [Accessed 9 Sept. 2011]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts made to reach representatives of the Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, the Dirección Nacional de Investigación Criminal, the Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos and the Ministerio Público du Honduras were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Factiva, Global Integrity, Honduras — Ministerio Público, United States — Department of State.

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.